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WAṬWĀṬ, RAŠID-AL-DIN

WAṬWĀṬ, **RAŠID-AL-DIN** Moḥammad b. Moḥammad ʿAbd-al-Jalil al-ʿOmari, commonly known as Rašid(-e) Waṭwāṭ (d. 578/1182), bilingual poet, philologist, and prose writer in Persian and Arabic, as well as a high-ranking official of the Khwarazmian court in the 12th century. There is considerable data on his biography, with the *Dictionary of Learned Men* by Yāqut (d. 1229) as the earliest source (see Yāqut, *Moʿjam al-odabāʾ* VII, pp. 91-95); some details of his life also appear in ʿAlāʾ-al-Din ʿAṭā-Malek Jovayni's *Tārik̲-e Jahāngošā* (see JAHĀNGOŠĀY-E JOVAYNI) in connection with the history of the Khwarazm (K̲ʷārazm) rulers (Jovayni, *Tārik̲* II, pp. 6-14) and in Qazvini's *Āṯār al-belād* (pp. 223-24); also in the chapter in ʿAwfi's *Lobāb al-albāb* on Montajab-al-Din al-Jovayni, chief secretary of Sultan Sanjar (*Lobāb al-albāb* I, pp. 80-86). Dawlatšāh consecrated a separate notice to Waṭwāṭin his *Taḏkera al-šoʿarāʾ* (pp. 69-73; the chapter is partially rendered in Browne, *Lit. Hist. Persia* II, pp. 330-33) and shaped his life story for later anthologists. The extensive biographical information has been summarized (with excerpts from primary sources) and discussed in the editor's introductions to Waṭwāṭ's works, especially by ʿAbbās Eqbāl (q.v.) in his edition of *Ḥadāʾeq al-seḥr*, as well as by Saʿid Nafisi in his edition of Waṭwāṭ's *Divān* (Tehran, 1960).

Waṭwāṭ was born at an unknown date in Balkh (or perhaps in Bukhara) in a family that traced its lineage to the caliph ʿOmar. He received his education and acquired a profound knowledge of the Arabic philological tradition in the Neẓāmiya *madrasa* in Balkh, became a scribe (*kāteb*) by profession, and moved to Khwarazm, where he spent the rest of his long life at the service of

its rulers. Rašid-al-Din was a prominent court poet; he also reached the post of *ṣāḥeb divān al-enšāʾ* (chief secretary) under the Ḵʷarazmšāh Atsïz Ḡarčaʾi (1127-56) and maintained it under his successor Il-Arslān (d. 1172). The closing years of his life are obscure. He died in his 97th year in 573/1177-78 (according to Yāqut) or in 578/1182-83 (Dawlatšāh) somewhere in Khwarazm. The anecdotes handed down in the extant sources depict Waṭwāṭ as a person of insignificant appearance and unpleasant disposition but forceful eloquence. According to Dawlatšāh, he was given the nickname *waṭwāṭ* or "the bird *farastuk*"(a swallow) because of his small stature and glib tongue. (The other and more likely meaning of the sobriquet is a bat; see Krymskiy, p. 349.) Since his bad temper earned him the enmity of other poets and courtiers, and his small stature and his baldness invited their taunts at the court assemblies, Waṭwāṭ used his rhetorical skills to shield himself from mockery and to entertain his patron Atsïz. On one occasion he happened to be engaged in a disputation in a *majles*, with an inkbottle in front of him. Atsïz ordered the tiny bottle to be removed so "that we may see who is behind it." Waṭwāṭ at once retorted with an Arabic proverb: "A man is a man by virtue of his two smallest parts, his heart and his tongue" (Dawlatšāh, p. 70; tr. E. G. Browne, *Lit. Hist. Persia* II, p. 330). Zakariyā(-ye) Qazvini provides another anecdote on the sovereign and his *kāteb* competing in witticism. Atsïz enjoyed the company of Waṭwāṭ, and he ordered him to build a house in front of his own so that they could converse with each other through the window at any time. On one occasion, when Waṭwāṭ looked out from the window, the sultan observed, "It is a head of a wolf that I see in your window." "Oh no," came the riposte from the *kāteb*, "it is not a wolf's head, but a mirror that I have put onto the window." Atsïz was much amused (*Āṯār al-belād*, p. 224).

Rašid-e Waṭwāṭ's Persian *Divān*, edited by S. Nafisi(Tehran, 1960) consists of around 8,500 verses,mostly panegyric *qaṣidas* with Ḵʷārazmšāh Atsïz as the most frequent addressee. Several *qaṣida* and *qeṭʿa* poems allude to Rašid-al-Din's falling into disfavor or being banished from the court; the poet uses all the repertoire of conventional arguments and embellishments to prove his innocence and win the pardon of his sovereign (for a set of chosen examples, see Eqbāl's Introduction to *Ḥadāʾeq*, pp. *lām–mim*). As a poet laureate of the court, Waṭwāṭ had various connections with the foremost poets of his epoch and produced an extensive poetic correspondence. He was eulogized by Ḵāqāni, Adib(-e) Ṣāber, and Anwari, the last regarding him as "superior to all the living celebrities, the Aḵtal and Ḥassān of his time" (*Divān*, ed. Rażawi, Tehran, 1959, p. 175). Waṭwāṭ in his turn praised them in his poems (the

laudations of Adib-e Ṣāber seem most frequent and impressive in his *Divān*), but his panegyrics tended to give way to satirical verses with the change of political climate or because of his notoriously foul temper. For example, Anwari and Waṭwāṭ became at some point the leading poets of warring rulers. While the Saljuq Sultan Sanjar was besieging the fortress of *Hazār-asp* during his campaign against Atsïz in 1147-48, the two former friends exchanged taunts in verse inscribed on an arrow (see *Browne, Lit. Hist. Persia* II, pp. 309-10, based onJovayni's report).

As a chief secretary of the Ḵʷārazmšāhān, Waṭwāṭ engaged in diplomatic correspondence with the caliphs and their officials (in Arabic), and with the court of Sanjar and some local rulers (in Persian). The author himself compiled a book of highly embellished prose *resāla*s in both languages, under the title of *ʿĀrāʾes al-ḵawāṭer wa nafāʾes al-nawāder*; nine Arabic and nine Persian letters are included into his *Abkār al-afkār fi'l-rasāʾel wa'l-ašʿār*; a later collection titled *Rasāʾel ʿArabi* is also extant.His Persian epistles have been edited by K. Toyserkāni (Rašid-al-Din Waṭwāṭ, *Nāmahā*, Tehran, 1960); a representative selection of his Arabic output was published by M. Fahmi (*Majmuʿat rasāʾel Rašid-al-Din al-Waṭwāṭ*, 2 parts, Cairo, 1315/1897-8). All those texts serve as useful primary sources for the historians of the period: see H. Horst, 1964; idem, 1966 (includes translation of 10 Arabic letters from Fahmi's edition); also Z. M. Bunyatov, 1986, pp. 30, 94, 103.

Waṭwāṭ had a passion for rhetoric and ethical proverbs; he compiled *ṣad kalema* "One hundred words" collections of beautiful Arabic sentences attributed to Muslim leaders and literary celebrities, many with Persian translations and commentary.He was a widely reputed collector of the sayings of the four Rightly-Guided Caliphs. His book *Maṭlob koll ṭāleb men kalām amir al-moʾmenin ʿAli b. Abi Ṭāleb* ([Knowledge] sought by every seeker from the words of Commander of the Faithful ʿAli b. Abi Ṭāleb), or *Tarjama-ye ṣad kalema* (Translation of One hundred words) has gained popularity in Shi'i Iran; it was published by Maḥmud ʿĀbedi (Moʾassesa-ye Nahj-al-balāḡa, Tehran, n.d.). For early publications and translations into Latin, German, and English, see F. C. de Blois; books on the hundred sayings of the other three caliphs remain unpublished. Most notable among Waṭwāṭ's collections of adages is *Laṭāʾef al-amṭāl wa ṭarāʾef al-aqwāl*. It contains 281 Arabic proverbs with the author's explanations in Persian; it has been published by S. M. B. Sabzavāri (n.p., 1979), and also by Ḥabiba Dāneš-āmuz (Tehran, 1997); for similar books preserved in manuscript, see the full list of his works in Eqbāl's

Introduction to *Ḥādaʾeq*, pp. *nun-hā – nun-ze.* Rašid-e Waṭwāṭ won a high reputation for proficiency in rhetoric; it was his textbook on the poetic art by name of *Ḥadāʾeq al-seḥr fi daqāʾeq al-šeʿr* (Gardens of magic in the subtleties of poetry) that brought him posthumous fame. A small Arabic and Persian dictionary *Noqud al-zawāḵer wa oqud al-jawāher*, known as *Ḥamd wa ṯanā* by its first words and extant in numerous manuscripts, is also attributed to Waṭwāṭ.

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